



Interim report on excavations at Nokalakevi-Archaeopolis in 2012



Dr Paul Everill MIFA FHEA FSA; Kathy Grant BA MSc AIFA;
Laura James BSc and Ian Colvin

With contributions by Benjamin Neil and Dr Jane Timby

March 2013

www.nokalakevi.org

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Summary**
- 2.0 Introduction**
 - 2.1 Overview
 - 2.2 Site Background and Location
 - 2.3 2012 Field Season
 - 2.4 2012 Aims and Objectives
 - 2.5 Scope of Report
- 3.0 Archaeological Background**
 - 3.1 A Brief History of Excavations at Nokalakevi
 - 3.2 Summary of Previous Results for Trench A
 - 3.3 Environmental evidence from Trench A
 - 3.4 Summary of Previous Results for Trench B
- 4.0 Archaeological Methodology**
 - 4.1 Excavation Methodology
 - 4.2 Post-excavation Methodology
 - 4.3 The Site Archives
- 5.0 Excavation Results**
 - 5.1 Trench A: Results Summary
 - 5.2 Trench A: Context Summary
 - 5.3 Trench A: Layers and Deposits
 - 5.4 Trench A: Walls, Masonry and Structures
 - 5.5 Trench A: Features Revealed in Section
 - 5.6 Trench B: Results Summary
 - 5.7 Trench B: Context Summary
 - 5.8 Trench B: Layers and Deposits
 - 5.9 Trench B: Burials
- 6.0 Discussion and Conclusion**
 - 6.1 Trench A: General Discussion of Results
 - 6.2 Trench B: General Discussion of Results
 - 6.3 Trench A: Proposed Aims and Objectives for 2013
 - 6.4 Trench B: Proposed Aims and Objectives for 2013
- 7.0 References**
- 8.0 Acknowledgements**
- 9.0 Appendix: Tables 4 and 5**

- Table 1: Quantification of site archives for NOK 12
- Table 2: Recorded contexts from NOK 12/A
- Table 3: Recorded contexts from NOK 12/B
- Table 4: Trench A Small Finds Register
- Table 5: Trench B Small Finds Register

- Figure 1: Nokalakevi Location Maps
- Figure 2: Trench Locations
- Figure 3: Trench A, section drawings
- Figure 4: Trench A, end of season plan
- Figure 5: One of the three riverstone fishing “reels” recovered from 443
- Figure 6: The butt end of a hafted stone tool recovered from 443
- Figure 7: Trench B, section drawings

1.0 Summary

The Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi (AGEN) carried out excavations in the Samegrelo region of western Georgia for the twelfth consecutive season at the site of Nokalakevi (Archaeopolis). The excavation took place between the 9th July 2012 and the 3rd August 2012 and was carried out by a team of British and Georgian professionals with the assistance of student volunteers from Georgia, Britain, United States of America, Canada, Ireland and Spain.

During this season, work continued in Trench A, located next to the eastern fortification wall, in which further limestone foundations were revealed, and deposits apparently dating from the Early Antique (6th-4th centuries BC) period were excavated.

This season also saw the continuation of excavation in the whole of Trench B located some 60m to the west of Trench A. A sondage in the southern part of the trench was excavated down to natural deposits and will now be backfilled.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 This document is an interim report of the results of the excavation undertaken at Nokalakevi in the 2012 season. A comprehensive report covering all the work undertaken between 2001 and 2010 is in preparation and will be published in the near future.
- 2.1.2 The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with Georgian state legislation regarding excavation within ancient monuments and the relevant permissions were sought from and granted by the Georgian Ministry of Culture.
- 2.1.3 All aspects of the fieldwork complied with the *Standard and Guidance*, and *Code of Conduct* of the UK 'Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA 2008; 2012).

2.2 Site Background and Location

- 2.2.1 Nokalakevi (which translates roughly as 'ruins where once a town was') is located in the west of Georgia in the province of Samegrelo, 15.5km northeast of Senaki (Figure 1). It sits in a loop of the River Tekhuri at the edge of the Colchian plain with hills on its northern and western perimeters. The site consists of an upper citadel atop a high hill and a lower town on the river terrace below, linked by strongly fortified walls.

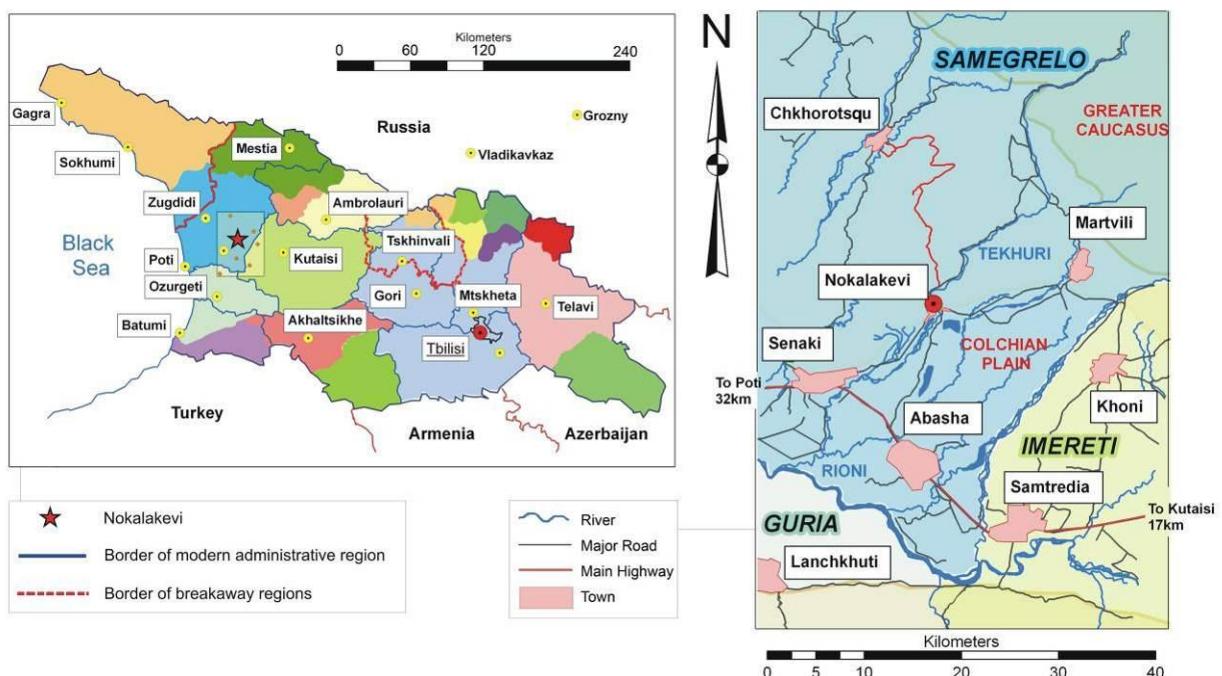


Figure 1: The location of Nokalakevi (Everill et al 2010)

- 2.2.2 Since the turn of the millennium, AGEN has focused on two areas within the walls, Trenches A and B. Trench A lies adjacent to the eastern fortification wall

of the lower town, just north of the east gate. Work has been ongoing in this trench since 2001 and it was expanded to its current size (10m east-west by 13m north-south) in 2004. Since successfully bringing all parts of Trench A back into phase in 2006 a series of multi-phased structural foundations and burials were uncovered within a rich Hellenistic layer.

- 2.2.3 Trench B, located some 60m to the west of Trench A, was opened in 2002 and measures 7.5m east-west by 20m north-south. Excavation in Trench B was suspended during the 2006 to 2008 field seasons in order to concentrate resources on Trench A, but in 2009 it was re-opened with a view to reaching earlier cultural layers.

2.3 2012 Field Season

- 2.3.1 The staff and volunteers arrived in Nokalakevi on Saturday 7th July 2012. Work began on Monday 9th July with the reopening of both Trench A and B for the season's excavation. Protective layers of plastic and backfill from the end of the 2011 season were removed from the base of the trench. Excavation took place between Monday 9th July and Friday 3rd August 2012.
- 2.3.2 The expedition staff, led by Professor David Lomitashvili (Head of the Expedition) and Ian Colvin, consisted of eleven specialists in total. The Georgian team was composed of Dr Besik Lortkipanidze (Historian), Dr Nino Kebuladze (Finds Conservator), Nikoloz Murghulia and Ano Tvaradze (Site Supervisors) and Shorena Khetsuriani (Site Assistant). The British team consisted of Dr Paul Everill (Co-Director of AGEN), Kathy Grant (Senior Site Supervisor), Laura James (Site Supervisor) and Dr Jane Timby (Ceramicist).
- 2.3.3 Our Georgian students/ volunteers were: Levan Jajvani, Tamar Niniashvili, Givi Kemoklidze, Giorgi Lomitashvili, Sandro Pateishvili, Tengo Adamia, Nuka Adamia, Nuka Mgelandze, Nata Mgelandze, Sandro Mgelandze, Irakli Kiknadze, Irakli Babunashvili, Tamta Klibadze, Tako Japaridze, Nino Nadirashvili, Giorgi Arziani and Guram Vashakmadze.
- 2.3.4 Our international students/ volunteers were: Jo Pennycook, Billy Finnegan and Will Hewson (University of Winchester); Maria Alvarez-Folgado (University of Leicester); Nuala McNamee (University College London); Thea de Armond (Stanford University, California); Sean Doherty (Fitchburg State University, Massachusetts); Haley Stuckey (DePaul University, Illinois); Jonathan Ouellet (Carleton University, Ontario)
- 2.3.5 Although the entire field team were involved in the initial opening of both Trench A and Trench B at the beginning of the season, it was necessary to distribute the field staff and volunteers between the two trenches once they were both fully operational. Trench A supervision was undertaken by Nikoloz Murghulia and Kathy Grant with a team of between 7 and 11 student volunteers, while Trench B was supervised by Laura James and Ano

Tvaradze with between 7 and 11 students.

2.4 2012 Aims and Objectives

2.4.1 The broad aims and objectives for the 2012 field season, based on previous work within each trench, were outlined in last year's report (Everill et al 2012). For Trench A these were as follows:

- To number the new rubble deposit and investigate its stratigraphic relationship with 281, 280 and 283 to establish whether the structure extends further to the west.
- To fully remove 287 so that a full understanding of 290 can be established.
- To investigate the stratigraphic relationship between 290 and 280.
- To concentrate on reducing the level of the south end of the trench with the aim of revealing the topography of the underlying deposits.
- To bring the south part of the site into phase with the north part of the trench.
- To update the ongoing section drawings utilising the trench edge.

2.4.2 The broad aims and objectives for the 2012 field season for Trench B were outlined as follows:

- Excavate the second half of the pit found within the cemetery area
- To remove the colluvial deposit 413 whilst maintaining the baulks supporting the walls. This to be done with a view to reaching early cultural layers and natural, thus enabling the backfilling of the cemetery area of Trench B.
- Complete the removal of 422 and 429 to investigate the charcoal patches to the north of the cemetery walls.
- To update the ongoing section drawings utilising the trench edge.

2.4.3 General Aims and Objectives for 2012:

- To add further information to the stratigraphic matrices for both trenches.
- As this was the 12th season of excavations carried out by the Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi, plans to undertake a synthesis publication of the first ten years of the Expedition's work at the site are underway. The revised publication target of a monograph is mid-2013.

2.5 Scope of Report

2.5.1 This report documents the results of excavations undertaken in Trenches A and B during the 2012 field season.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 A Brief History of Excavations at Nokalakevi

- 3.1.1 For a fuller discussion of the history and study of Nokalakevi please see Everill et al (2010). Key developments can be summarised as follows:
- 3.1.2 Modern study of Nokalakevi can be traced back to 1833 when the Swiss philologist Frédéric Dubois Du Montpéraux proposed the site as Aia, the capital of Homeric Colchis in the Argonautic myths, and Archaeopolis, the capital of late antique Lazika mentioned in the *Novels* of the Emperor Justinian, and by Byzantine historians and chroniclers.
- 3.1.3 In the winter of 1930-31, a joint German-Georgian expedition led by Dr A.-M. Schneider of the German Archaeological Institute in Istanbul undertook the first archaeological excavations at the site. Schneider's results were published in the German periodical *Forschungen und Fortschritte* in September 1931 and confirmed the identification of the site with Archaeopolis.
- 3.1.4 In 1973 the S. Janashia Museum of History established a large and well-equipped expedition to excavate and conserve the historical monument at Nokalakevi. This continued until the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 when large scale works at Nokalakevi temporarily ceased. Three volumes of results were edited by Parmen Zakaraia (1981; 1989; 1993).
- 3.1.5 The current excavations at the site began in 2001 with the establishment of the joint Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi (AGEN).

3.2 Summary of Previous Results for Trench A

- 3.2.1 Comprehensive accounts of previous seasons' excavation results were provided in the relevant reports (Armour and Colvin 2004; Everill and Ginns 2005; Neil 2006; Everill 2007; Grant and Everill 2009; Grant et al 2010; Everill et al 2011a; Everill et al 2012). The following summarised points are pertinent to this year's results:
- 3.2.2 A total of 27 burials dating from the Hellenistic period were excavated between 2001 and 2011, plus three late Roman burials. Of the Hellenistic period burials, four were contained within ceramic vessels; three others were cremations. A further five had been buried with jewellery, including bead necklaces, rings and bracelets.
- 3.2.3 First exposed in 2003 and more thoroughly in 2006 and 2007, a line of unbonded limestone boulders (context 187) was uncovered measuring approximately 6m from east to west with a return to the north (at the western end) that extends for 1m. At the northern end of this return a large tapered post-pit [219] was revealed and directly east of this a further post-pit [224]

was also uncovered. It seems likely that [219] once held a door post for the entrance to the building. These separate contexts were recorded together as parts of **Structure 1**.

- 3.2.4 After this area was fully revealed and investigated in 2007, subsequent lines of walls were exposed, confirming that these archaeological remains represented a complex sequence of Hellenistic structures.
- 3.2.5 Further excavation of the area in 2007 and 2008 made it possible to formulate ideas about the types of structure and the building materials used. The walls appear to have been constructed on top of a foundation of large limestone blocks. These blocks were overlain by a horizontal wooden sill consisting of one or more beams, into which were fixed upright posts measuring c.100mm in diameter. Evidence for these posts was recovered as charcoal both in Trench A and within a comparable structure in nearby Trench B in 2005. Impressions of wattle within pieces of burnt daub in both trenches give further, clear indications that these walls were predominantly of a clay and timber construction.
- 3.2.6 No archaeological evidence for roofing material was found in these Hellenistic period contexts (in contrast with the great number of tiles excavated from the later Roman contexts), however buildings of a wattle and daub/ clay and timber construction are more likely to have been thatch or shingle roofed.
- 3.2.7 **Structure 2** was made up of a line of unbonded limestone boulders (context 212) on an east-west alignment (4.5m long) with a return at the western end extending for 1m to the south. The east-west element of this structure is almost parallel to the east-west section of **Structure 1**.
- 3.2.8 **Structure 3** was a roughly square structure consisting of a line of unbonded limestone boulders. It was approximately 2.5m square, with the suggestion that there may have been an entrance at the northwest corner. It lay underneath **Structure 2** and about half a metre south of **Structure 1** on the same orientation as the other buildings. **Structure 3** was sealed by a substantial deposit of burnt material (216) – predominantly daub.
- 3.2.9 Excavations from 2007 to 2010 were focussed on establishing the phasing of these structures/ structural elements. Since 2010 work has revealed underlying deposits dating to the 6th-4th centuries BC. Also included in these deposits are residual elements of animal figurines dating to the 8th-7th centuries BC.

3.3 Environmental evidence from Trench A

- 3.3.1 The burnt deposit (216) was excavated in 2007 and has provided a valuable insight into life during the Hellenistic period at Nokalakevi-Tsikhegoji. The sieving and flotation of soil samples by Dr Marine Bokeria in that year

produced a wide range of carbonised seeds, including wild and domesticated grape (*vitis vinifera*, *vitis sylvestris*), wheat (*triticum sp.*), pea (*pisum sativum*), rowan (*sorbus sp.*) and black walnut (*junglans regia*) (Bokeria 2009).

- 3.3.2 Palynological study in 2009 by Dr Eliso Kvavadze (2010) of samples from grave fill 260, around the skull of skeleton 261, also produced very interesting results. These provide further evidence for the climate and flora of Nokalakevi and surrounding districts in the Hellenistic period, as well as details of local burial practice.
- 3.3.3 The sample taken from the region of the forehead produced residues of human hair and textile fibres that probably represent the remains of a shroud or head covering. These fibres were predominantly of grey and yellow flax, with a smaller number of cotton fibres that had been dyed black. A single sheep hair was found. Microscopic cells of tree wood were thought to represent evidence for some kind of wooden construction, perhaps a coffin. Plant pollen was dominated by pine and cereals, including wheat, but evidence was also found of hazel, alder, lime, nettle and hoary plantain. The microscopic remains of a large number of grass plants were also found, which was interpreted as evidence for the burial being lain onto, or covered by, a layer of grass.
- 3.3.4 The sample taken from the region of the eyes of skeleton 261 produced similar evidence for tree wood, flax and cotton, but with the additional discovery of yellow wool fibres and evidence of ticks. In addition to the plant pollen described above, evidence was also found of beech, spruce, fir, oak, chestnut, hornbeam and celery.
- 3.3.5 A third sample, taken from around the neck vertebrae of skeleton 261, produced evidence of bird feathers/ down. This was interpreted by Kvavadze as the remains of a down pillow which had been placed under the head, however might be more likely related to the presence of a whole chicken placed in the grave, alongside the human remains. There was further evidence of flax and cotton fibres, and ticks or mites. Tree pollen included, in addition to those described above, caucasian wingnut and caucasian elm. Grains of domesticated grape vine and walnut were also found. Grass pollen was dominated by what Kvavadze refers to as yard and garden weeds, including knot grass, chicory, fragrant wormwood and hoary plantain. There was also evidence of emmer wheat and two-rowed barley.

3.4 Summary of Previous Results for Trench B

- 3.4.1 Comprehensive accounts of previous seasons' excavation results were provided in the relevant reports (Everill 2003; Everill 2005a; Everill 2005b; Grant et al 2010, Everill et al 2011a, Everill et al 2012). The following summarised points are pertinent to this year's results:

- 3.4.2 Thirty nine human burials were excavated within Trench B from 2002 to 2011, the vast majority of which were located within the small area of the northeastern corner of the Byzantine/ Medieval cemetery exposed in the southwest corner of the trench (Trench B/South). While the possibility of further burials remains high, the deposit underlying the cemetery soil was first exposed in 2009, suggesting that work is nearly complete on that phase.
- 3.4.3 The remains of a Hellenistic period clay and timber building were first exposed in 2004, and further examined in 2005. This building was characterised by a line of substantial, though undressed, limestone blocks which ran the full width of the far north of the trench. This wall base was orientated roughly east-west, and in places there were remains of the beam that once rested upon them. This beam survived in fragmentary form as charcoal, and the fire which apparently consumed the building also resulted in a large quantity of burnt daub which sealed related surfaces south of the building. Impressions of wattle within the daub, and fragmentary remains of narrow posts (which were presumably set upright into the beam) gave clear indications of the likely form of the building. Although no further investigation of this structure has taken place since the 2005 season, it was revisited in 2010 when the northern part of Trench B was reopened and it was noted that there has not been too much degradation of the visible structure over the course of the five years between excavations. Directly south of the wall, ceramic material sealed between the burnt daub and the underlying yard surface was identified as belonging to the Hellenistic period. Further investigation of the structure itself has been put on hold whilst the yard area, which covered much of the northern half of the trench, has been fully excavated. The structure has been protected by bringing the northern limit of the trench south by 1m, which also serves as a step in the side giving protection to the archaeologists working in the area.

4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

4.1 Excavation Methodology

- 4.1.1 During this season excavation continued in Trenches A and B. Hand-excavation was carried out using picks, shovels and trowels in order to clean and reduce the level of the trench, define new layers and uncover archaeological features. All removed soil was scanned for the presence of artefacts, which were recovered and bagged for dating and analysis. A context number was assigned to the initial cleaning layer at the beginning of the season to ensure that any unstratified finds were kept separate from the underlying layer.
- 4.1.2 Local workmen were employed to help with spoil removal and spoil heap management.
- 4.1.3 A digital photographic record was maintained throughout the excavation of the trench, features and finds. A register of all photographs taken was kept for the archive. In addition, a blackboard, north arrow and scales were included within the photographs to ensure that the details of the feature/artefact/structure were better illustrated.
- 4.1.4 Levels of deposits, layers, features and small finds were taken throughout the excavation. In addition, spot heights were taken across the trench at the end of the season.
- 4.1.5 Individual features, sections and graves were planned at 1:10 and the trench itself was planned at 1:20.
- 4.1.6 Following the introduction of a palynological specialist from the Georgian National Museum to the expedition in 2009, a series of smaller samples were taken from sealed contexts within the graves for pollen analysis; and soil samples were collected from secure contexts within graves (e.g. from under long bones/within pot vessels) during the course of the excavations.
- 4.1.7 As graves were uncovered small tools were used to fully expose and clean the skeleton and associated artefacts for planning and photographs. On the completion of a 1:10 plan the skeleton was lifted and bagged by separate elements (e.g. left arm, right leg).
- 4.1.8 At the end of the season both trenches were re-covered using plastic sheeting, and backfilled sufficiently to cover the plastic, in order to protect the underlying archaeology until next season..

4.2 Post-excavation Methodology

- 4.2.1 Finds washing took place at the end of each day's excavation. All finds were cleaned, dried and bagged according to context and type to ease quantification and assessment.
- 4.2.2 Ceramic material recovered from each context was sorted by fabric, form and style. These results were then catalogued to produce a separate pottery report.
- 4.2.3 Selected small finds and interesting pottery sherds were photographed and illustrated for the archive.
- 4.2.4 No human remains were excavated this year. However, the usual process of osteological assessment, comprising the analysis of both human and animal skeletal material, is undertaken once skeletons/disarticulated bones are lifted. Human skeletal assessment consists of, where possible, the determination of an individual's sex, age and stature, and the noting of any unusual/pathological traits.

4.3 The Site Archives

- 4.3.1 Two separate site archives were maintained (one for each trench) during the course of the excavations. The context register for this season continues on from past seasons' excavations within each trench and therefore begins at **293** for Trench A and **449** for Trench B. The contexts have been tabulated below.
- 4.3.2 Since the expedition is an international collaboration the archive is completed on site in both English and Georgian. This means that there are two copies of the site archive for each trench. The Georgian archive is stored at the Georgian National Museum in Tbilisi, and the British one in Cambridge, with security copies at the University of Winchester. The site illustrations, such as feature and trench plans, are also copied to ensure that the archive is fully maintained in both the UK and Georgia.
- 4.3.3 Quantification of site archives for NOK 12 (*Table 1*):

TRENCH	A	B
Number of Contexts	10	11
Plan and section drawings	4	10
Photographs	188	198
Soil Samples	6	2
Small finds	11	3

5.0 EXCAVATION RESULTS

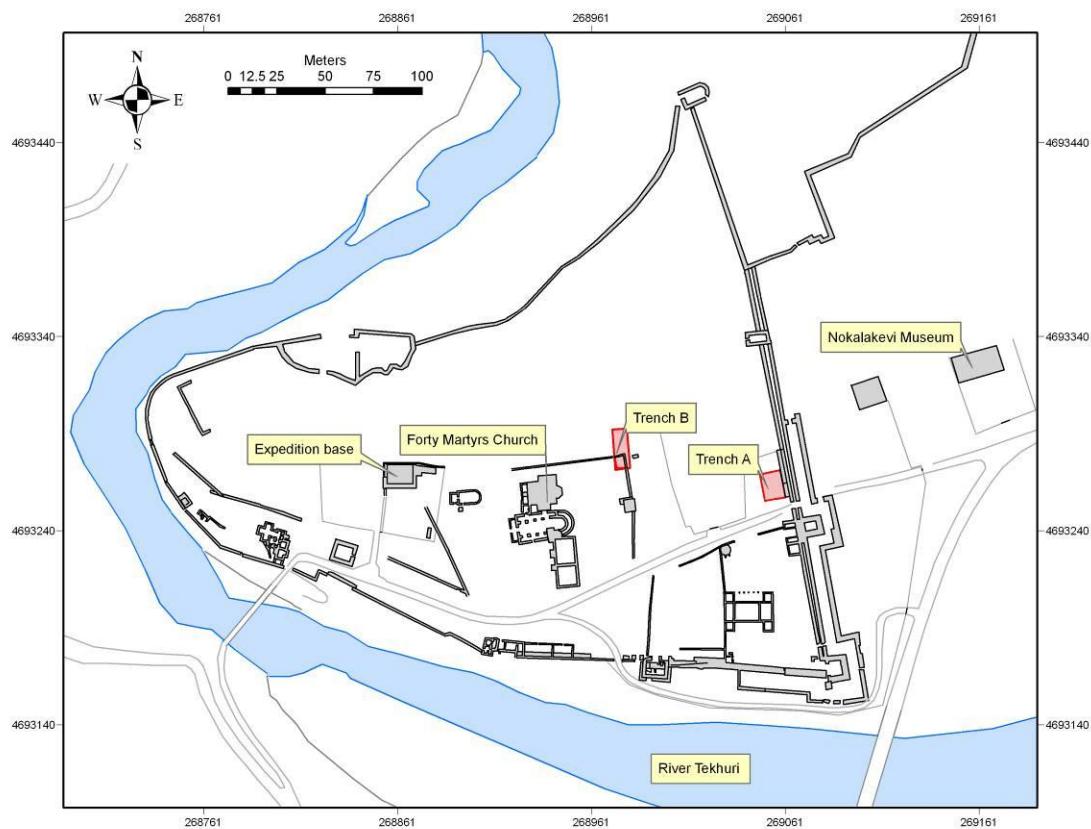


Figure 2: Trench locations from the 2009 RTK GPS survey (Everill et al 2011b)

5.1 Trench A: Results Summary

- 5.1.1 The results of this season's fieldwork in Trench A have been presented below. Ten context numbers were taken out for this trench this year **293-302** and excavation continued in some contexts assigned in previous years.
- 5.1.2 A list of this year's small finds can be seen in Table 4 in the Appendix.

5.1.4 Table 2: Recorded contexts from NOK 12/A (All levels refer to the zero established in the 1980s)

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions/Details	Max. Depth/Thick.	Max. Height/Level
293	Deposit	Cleaning layer	Trench	100mm	-
294	Deposit	Mid brown clayey silt deposit in north of trench	5m N-S x 7m E-W	150mm	-4.10
295	Fill	Dergi fill in small find 9 (from Nok 11/A)	Sample 2		-3.97
296	Fill	Dergi fill in small find 12 (from Nok 11/A)	Sample 3		-3.95
297	Cut	Late pit in south-facing section	1.45m wide	560mm	-2.10
298	Fill	Fill of pit 297	1.45m wide	560mm	-
299	Cut	Small pit in south-facing section (west of eastern hearth)	0.56m wide	260mm	-3.11
300	Fill	Fill of pit 299	0.56m wide	260mm	-
301	Cut	Small pit in south-facing section (east of eastern hearth)	0.67m wide	560mm	-2.82
302	Fill	Fill of pit 301	0.67m wide	560mm	-

5.2 Trench A: Context Summary

- 5.2.1 In preparation for the 2012 field season the sides and surface of Trench A were cleared of silt and vegetation that had accumulated since last year.
- 5.2.2 An initial cleaning layer was assigned (context 283). It was necessary to use this number to identify and distinguish any residual/intrusive finds uncovered during the cleaning process since the trench had been open for a year and spoil had been partially backfilled to secure the plastic sheet laid down to protect archaeological remains. Finds were collected and bagged, and a pre-excavation photograph was taken.
- 5.2.3 Several contexts from previous seasons were investigated further during this season's excavations, including contexts 272, 280, 274, 283, 288, 290, 291. These contexts will therefore be described in more detail in this season's

report.

- 5.2.4 The 1m wide east-west aligned step, which was established across the full width of the southern extent of the trench in 2011 in order to improve access and protect the preserved street surface, was also maintained this year.
- 5.2.5 No inhumation burials were uncovered in Trench A during this season.

5.3 Trench A: Layers and Deposits

- 5.3.1 Previous years' excavations have concentrated on attempting to bring the trench into a single phase/level of activity due to its uncertain underlying topography. Changes to the relief over time, largely as a result of colluvial activity, have made it difficult to identify same-phase occupation levels within the trench. However, closer analysis of the layers within this trench demonstrated that although the northern part of this trench seems stratigraphically higher, it is in fact already at the same phase/level as the southern part of the trench.
- 5.3.2 Excavation in the northern part of the trench revealed layer **294**; a moderately compacted mid grey brown clayey silt with occasional daub flecks, assorted stones, cess mottling and rare fragments of crushed limestone and charcoal flecks. This deposit is located across the northern part of the trench where it meets **272** to the east and **290** in the middle (towards the south). This deposit is an Early Antique layer which continues beyond the current limit of excavation and will be further investigated.
- 5.3.3 Two daub concentrations **274** and **288**, which were first observed within this deposit in 2010 and 2011 respectively, were excavated this season. While the daub, charcoal and cess inclusions within deposit **294** may be evidence of domestic refuse, the presence of these concentrated daub areas within the context may also indicate discrete workshop/industrial activity. These concentrations were reduced by mini-mattock and trowel. Samples of daub were taken from both contexts (samples 4 and 5 respectively) to establish if any seeds are preserved within. Excavation of the northernmost context, **274**, demonstrated that this was only a thin deposit which seems to overlie context **294**, but in-situ firing has probably caused some of the surrounding soil to become heat-affected. The southern context, **288**, seems more substantial and seems to have spread further than **274**. Further investigation in this area next year will be required to understand the more complex strata of these contexts.
- 5.3.4 In 2011, context **291** was revealed beneath layer **287**, in the south-eastern corner of the trench and east of the north-south aligned foundation wall (**280**). Context **291** was a very dark, fine charcoal layer which contained fragments of burnt wood. In 2011, three ceramic vessels (2011 small find numbers 8, 9

and 12) were revealed but left in-situ for excavation this year. Following further cleaning of this deposit four additional ceramic vessels, which were assigned small find's numbers 2 to 5, were recovered from context **291** this year. The dark, charcoal-rich deposit directly adjacent to **280** was sampled for further analysis (sample no. 1). This deposit has been interpreted as a fallen, burnt shelf which was perhaps erected on the eastern side of the north-south wall of structure **280** and probably held the ceramic vessels which were encountered almost complete, but upside down seemingly where they fell. During the lifting of the three vessels uncovered last year, samples of the fills from vessels 9 and 12 (contexts **295** and **296** respectively) were taken for further assessment and to establish whether any charred seeds or cremated bones were present within them (sample numbers 2 and 3 respectively). As **291** was removed, layer **272** was revealed directly underneath.

- 5.3.5 The removal of layer **284** in 2011 further exposed layer **272** in the northeast of the trench. First identified during 2010, layer **272** was described as having coarse components of varied size, from large unworked limestone blocks to small angular stones, within a matrix of silty clay. Further excavation this year revealed that this layer extended across the entire eastern side of the trench (except where it appears to be bisected by context **290** in the middle of the trench, raising the possibility that **290** is in fact a fill of a negative feature) c.11m north-south, and for 2.6m east-west. The initial interpretation of this context suggested that it may be the remnants of a collapsed structure, but the compaction and extent of this context now suggest that it may be a surface, perhaps utilising recycled demolition rubble from a previous structure. It is interesting that the later Hellenistic structures (illustrated in the 2008 report) also respect the alignment of context **272** perhaps indicating strict boundaries/external space in use for a prolonged period. Fragments of 8th century BC zoomorphic figurines were revealed within context **272** in the 2010 and 2011 seasons, but these were interpreted as residual or intrusive. This year's excavation of the layer revealed several additional fragments (10+) of zoomorphic figurines. Two small finds were recovered from layer **272** this year: a copper alloy circular fragment/possible bracelet (no. 1) and a bone needle 2 (no. 6) (see Table 4 in Appendix I).
- 5.3.6 The removal of **284** in 2011 also exposed a very dark grey silty clay (**290**) which was mainly concentrated within the central third of the trench orientated approximately NNW-SSE. This context was further excavated this year to reveal a concentration of assorted, limestone blocks which are loosely orientated on an east-west alignment, but with no obvious structural form. It is still not clear whether this deposit lies within a cut, but the removal of **291** revealed a continuation of layer **272** in the south-eastern corner of the trench, south of **290**. It is hoped that the 2013 excavations will clarify the exact stratigraphic relationship between these contexts as well as providing an interpretation of the large limestone blocks within deposit **290**, i.e. whether they are structural. Four small finds were recovered from layer **290** this year; a copper/bronze object (no. 7), an 8th-7th century BC sardonic bead (no. 9), a horn from a ram figurine (no. 10) and a ceramic lid handle (no.11).

5.4 Trench A: Walls, Masonry and Structures

- 5.4.1 Following the initial cleaning of this trench at the start of the season, the structural foundation stones (280) were removed so that excavation could continue. This structure was first revealed in the 2010 season and was further investigated in 2011. Whilst some of the undressed boulders from the south-western corner of the trench were left, the majority were removed including the east-west aligned foundation wall and southern return at the western end. The easternmost, north-south aligned wall was left *in-situ*, so that it could be used as a reference point in planning context 291, a deposit located immediately east of the wall. The context located to the south of structure (283) was also further reduced and frequent 6th - 4th century BC pottery sherds and a ceramic vessel (small find no. 8) were recovered from within this context. The evident relationships and shared orientation of the foundations revealed since 2006 suggest that they may all be Hellenistic, sitting in cuts that truncate underlying Early Antique (6th-4th centuries BC) deposits. These cuts were not observed archaeologically, perhaps due to the homogeneity of the deposits.
- 5.4.2 Towards the end of this season's excavation, a new north-south aligned foundation consisting, of undressed limestone boulders, was revealed along the trench edge (western baulk) in the south-western corner of the trench. This new structure will require further investigation next year and as such a context number has not yet been assigned. Final cleaning around this wall segment revealed a possible foundation cut through a newly uncovered, firm reddish brown gravelly/slightly metalled layer slightly metalled deposit which also requires further investigation. This foundation, which respects the alignments of Hellenistic period structures, provides the most compelling evidence for the true nature of these structural remains.

5.5 Trench A: Features Revealed in Section

- 5.5.1 At the beginning of this season, the western and northern sections were cleaned so that the sections could be more accurately recorded. Three pits, 297, 299 and 301 had weathered out in the south-facing section over time and had consequently not been recorded in previous years.
- 5.5.2 The earliest of the three pits was 299. This small, shallow pit with a concave profile, was observed at the same stratigraphic level as the two hearths, 176 and 178, thought to be from the early Byzantine period and recorded in 2006. It is likely, therefore that this feature is related to the activity taking place at that time, which was largely associated with the construction processes relating to the fortification wall. The location of this feature immediately to the west of the eastern hearth 176, and the daub and charcoal flecking within its

clayey silt fill **300**, suggests that it was probably utilised for the deposition of material removed from the hearth. This feature was sealed by ash layer **177** which appears to seal all of the hearth activity.

- 5.5.3 Pit/posthole **301** was observed to cut the eastern hearth **176**. The pit was steep-sided with a tapering u-shaped profile. It contained a lightly compacted, mid-grey clayey silt fill (**302**) with frequent limestone blocks (c.200 x 100mm) and mortar fragments. This feature was also sealed by ash layer **177**, so although the eastern hearth was stratigraphically earlier than this feature, it was probably roughly contemporary.
- 5.5.4 The most recent pit was **297**, which was first revealed in the 2004 season, but was recorded this year as it was not included in the records from that year. This feature was seen to cut the Byzantine abandonment layer **110**. The recent fills within this pit were combined in the records as **298**, because the abundant CBM inclusions within the feature and its depth of only 0.45m below ground level, suggest that it is quite late in the archaeological sequence. This feature was partially overlain by fallen masonry **103** before being sealed by modern made ground **101** and topsoil.

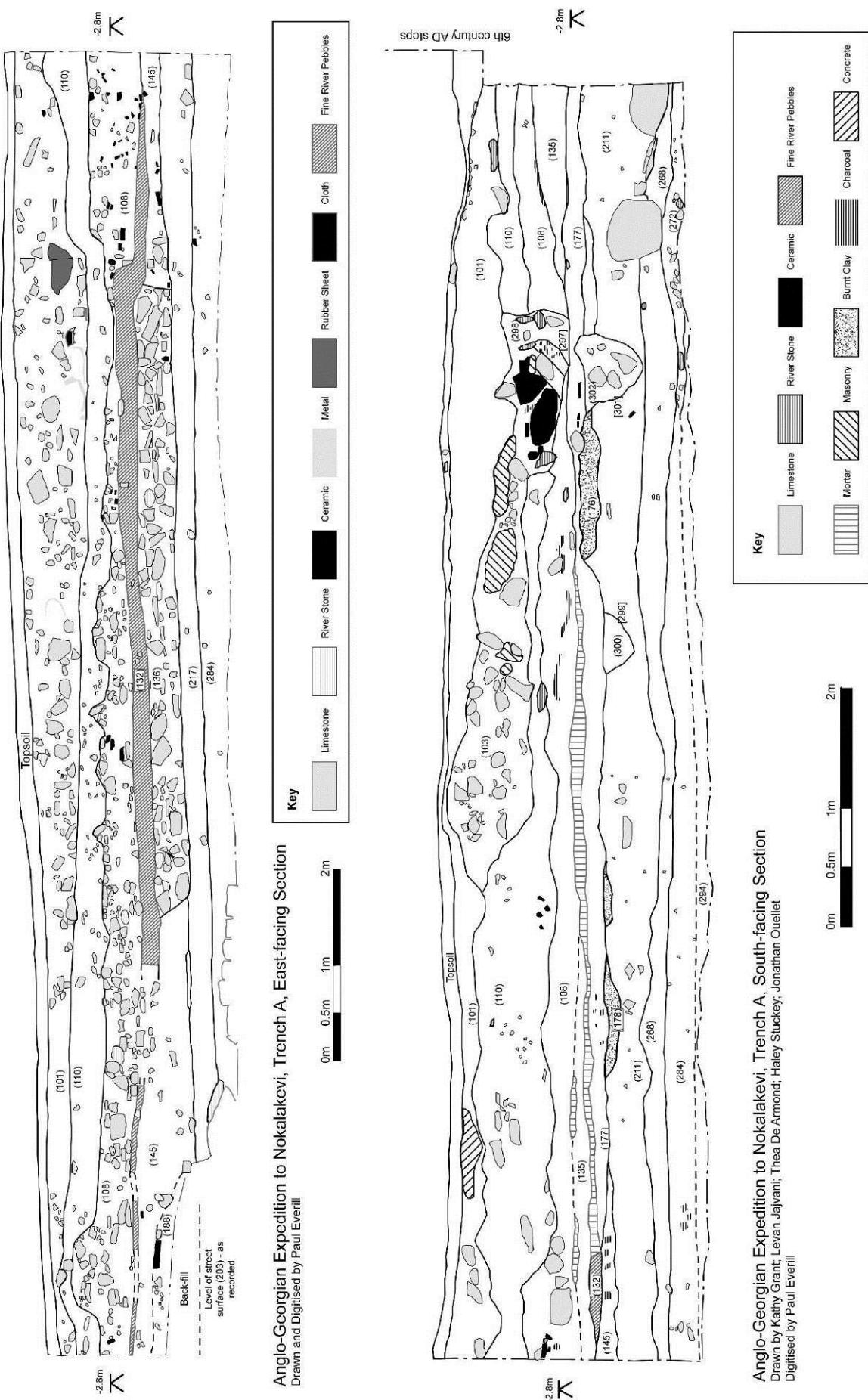


Figure 3: Trench A, section drawings

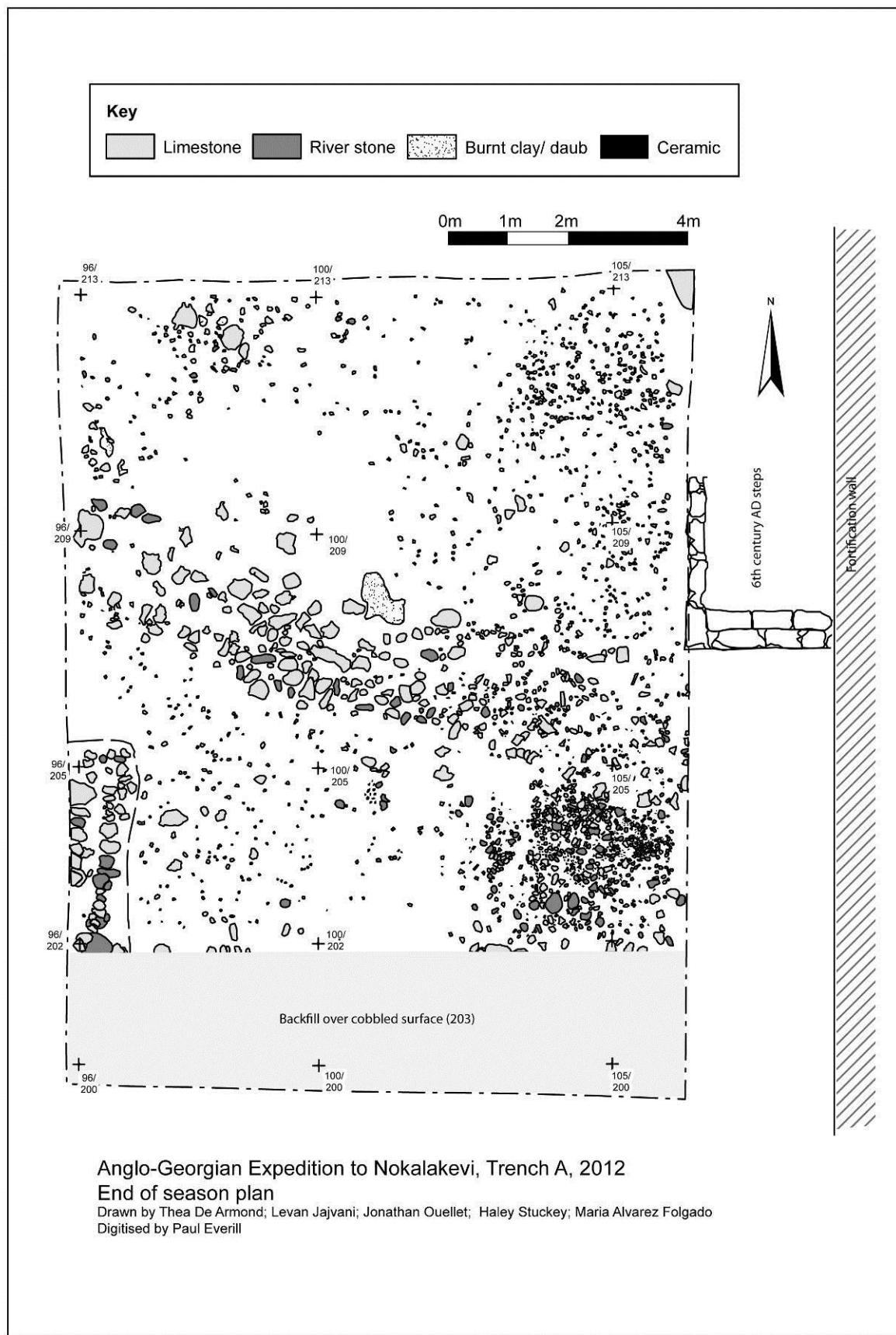


Figure 4: Trench A, end of season plan

5.6 Trench B: Results Summary

5.6.1 A summary of the results from this seasons field work in Trench B have been presented in the table below. A total of 11 new contexts were assigned this year (**449-460**) and some previously assigned contexts were further investigated (**413; 443-448**).

5.6.2 A list of this year's small finds can be seen in Table 5 in the Appendix.

5.6.3 *Table 3: Recorded contexts from NOK 12/B (All levels refer to the zero established in the 1980s)*

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions/ Details	Max Depth/ Thick.	Max Ht/ Level
413	Layer	Mid greyish brown silky clay matrix around large limestone rocks approx. 0.05m - 0.15m diameter. Hard compaction with moderate charcoal and daub fleck inclusions.	Covers cemetery sondage	0.62m	-2.21m
443	Layer	A firm dark greyish-brown silty clay with rare inclusions of very small stones and flecks of daub	Covers cemetery sondage	0.35m	-2.56m
444	Layer	Dark brown firm compacted clay cobbles and daub fragments truncated by 422	Extends south into trench by 4.00m, width 6.14m	Excavated 0.44m	-0.21m
445	Layer	Dark greyish brown silty clay moderate compaction inclusions of pot stone cobbles and small flecks of charcoal. Truncated by 422 and 429	3.44m long, 1.28m wide before heading into eastern section	0.32m	-0.54m
446	Layer	Grey silty clay with soft or moderate compaction inclusions of cobbles with daub. Truncated by 422 and 429	Extends north by 2.8m	0.40m	-0.84m
447	Layer	Silty clay light brown with daub and charcoal flecks included excavated within (446) must have been very indistinct with shallow depth.	Approx 0.9m diameter	indistinct	-
448	Layer	Charcoal circle excavated during this season this year but had no substance	0.3 x 0.25	0.05m	-
449	Unstrat	Unstrat finds from north	-	-	-
450	Unstrat	Unstrat finds from south	-	-	-

451	Cut	Top of the cut is not visible, flattish base visible in section with near vertical sides. Cut through (401) filled by (452)	0.60m wide	0.85m	Seen at -1.37m
452	Fill	Dark brownish grey clayey silt with moderate fine sub angular limestone fragments moderate pottery inclusions and occasional daub flecks. Fragments of degraded wood (possible coffin) human bone found within fill which is of moderate compaction. Situated in SE corner Tr B	0.60m wide	0.85m	Seen at -1.37m
453	Fill	Dark greyish brown silty clay with moderate compaction. Mod sub angular limestone frags mod pot and CBM and rare occasional daub flecks	0.80m wide	1.10m	Seen at -1.30m
454	Skeleton	Lower part of the tibia and fibula and 2 toe bones excavated or uncovered. This burial will not be excavated further. Cut visible from very high up in the cemetery (401).	-	-	Approx -2.30m
455	Cut	Sub circular or oval in plan probably not seen in plan found in section only with near vertical sides that do taper to a width at base of 0.6m actual base is not visible contains sk 454 and fill (453)	0.80m wide x 0.30m long extending under western section	1.10m	Seen at -1.30m
456	Fill	Silty clay mid grey brown with moderate firm compaction with small rocks 3-8cm diameter. Seen in section only	2.92m wide	0.27m	0.23m
457	Fill	Dark brown clayey fill with firm compaction with large rocks included seen in section only.	1.71m wide	0.21m	-0.09m
458	Cut	Seen in section only oval rounded corners filled by 456, 457, and 425.	3.50m wide	0.95m	0.56m
459	Layer	Reddish brown clayey layer with moderate compaction, pottery found in a dump in the section also includes small stones	1.32m wide, 0.4m long	0.22m	-0.06m
460	Layer	Dark reddish brown, silty clay with firm compaction. Sterile natural layer.	Covers cemetery sondage	Excavated 0.6m	-2.84m

5.7 Trench B: Context Summary

5.7.1 Trench B had accumulated a lot of silt and vegetation since the 2011 season. Initial work was undertaken to prepare the trench for excavation. This took two

days and context numbers were assigned to the unstratified finds produced by this preparation in the north (**449**) and south (**450**) of the trench.

- 5.7.2 A step in from the northern baulk was established last year in order to protect the Hellenistic building (**381** and associated contexts) found in 2004 from damage. The previously discovered Hellenistic period foundation (**381**) remains unexcavated, with plans to excavate this structure in its entirety in the future.

5.8 Trench B: Deposits and Cut Features

- 5.8.1 This year it was possible to remove the rubble layers remaining from last season's work (**422** and **429**). The underlying contexts noted last year, **445** and particularly **447**, were not clear at the beginning of this year's excavation. Two of the small finds were found within **447**, however the full extent of this context could not be determined this year.
- 5.8.2 The circular feature (**445**) which was so prominent at the end of last year proved to be a very ephemeral layer. A sample of the charcoal spread (**448**) was taken although this feature was also not as clear as it was by the conclusion of the 2011 season.
- 5.8.3 A large limestone boulder from the north western corner of the trench was removed, as were two other similarly large rocks from within **422**. It was observed that layer **429** overlies layer **422**, but due to their apparently homogenous nature had not been noted before.
- 5.8.4 The remainder of the colluvial layer (**443**) within the cemetery sondage was also fully excavated and produced a number of artefacts that indicate a Bronze Age date. These include flat riverstones with notches made on opposite sides, perhaps to enable fishing line to be reeled around them (Figure 5); the butt end of a broken stone tool with a hole drilled for hafting (Figure 6); and fragments of pottery. Comparison with analogous material will be undertaken to determine the date. Layer **443** was approximately 0.67m in depth and was the earliest cultural layer within the sondage.
- 5.8.5 Underlying **443** was layer **460**, which was a very compact, reddish brown silty clay determined to be natural and showing no evidence of human occupation. This was tested by excavating a 0.5m wide slot through the deposit on the western trench edge, which established that it was indeed sterile. The cemetery sondage will now be backfilled over the winter.

5.9 Trench B: Burials

- 5.9.1 No further burials were excavated in 2012, but the cleaning of trench sides, in preparation for the final recording of the cemetery sondage, revealed two further grave cuts. Investigating the first of these (grave **455**; skeleton **454**) in

the southwest of the area uncovered the feet and distal tibia and fibula. The grave continued beyond the western trench edge and consequently this burial was not further excavated. The second grave cut (451) was observed in the south eastern corner of the cemetery sondage and appeared to included highly degraded wood, with *in situ* bone visible in the trench edge. The indication is that this burial was perhaps no older than the 19th century and this was also not further excavated.



Figure 5: One of the three riverstone fishing “reels” recovered from 443



Figure 6: The butt end of a hafted stone tool recovered from 443

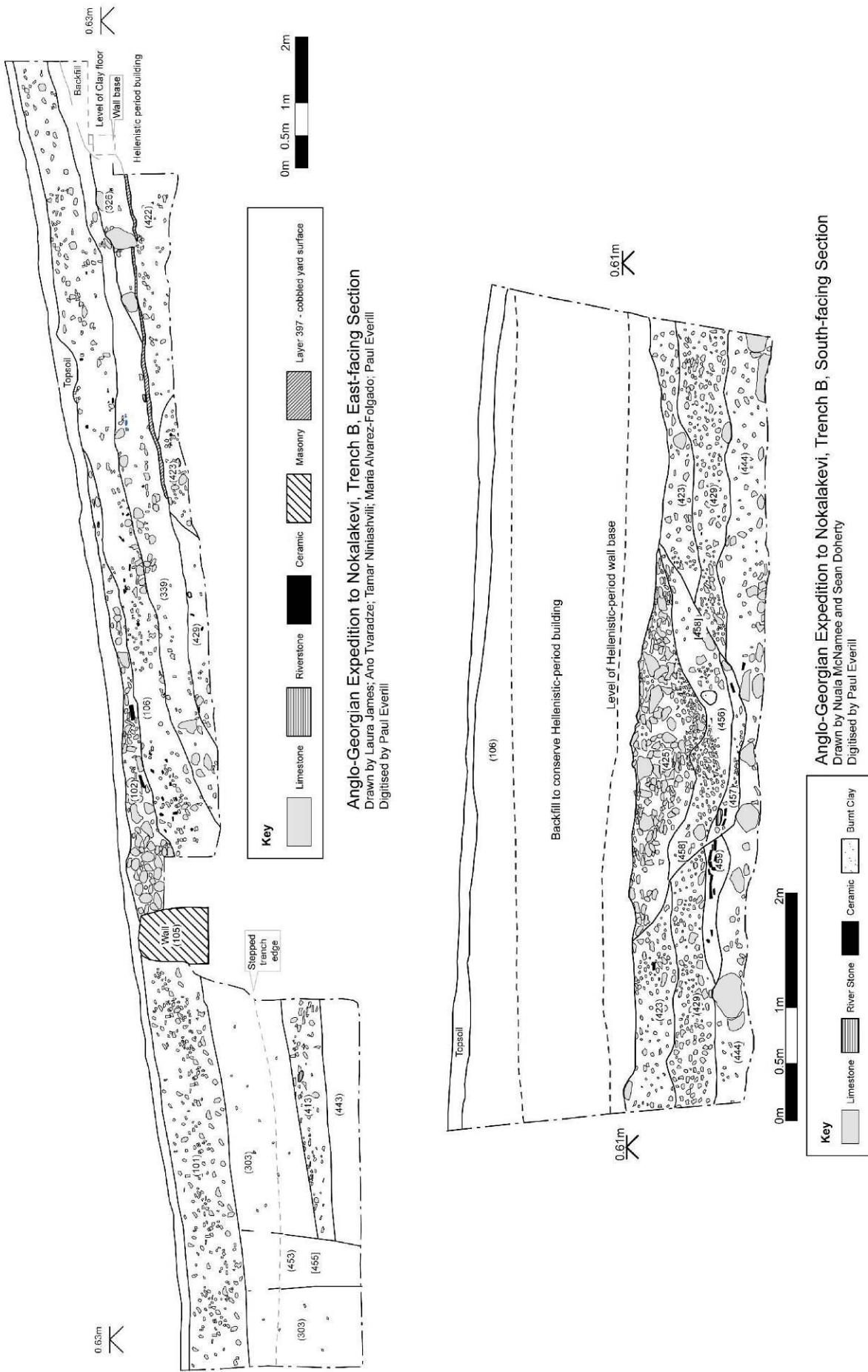


Figure 7: Trench B, section drawings

6.0 DISCUSSION

6.1 Trench A: General Discussion of Results

6.1.1 *Layers and Deposits*

Further investigation of the daub concentrations **278** and **288** demonstrated that the northernmost of the two (**278**) was just a small spread overlying **294**. The southernmost context (**288**) seemed to be more substantial and requires further excavation

The removal of layer **291** exposed more of layer **272** directly underneath. It is likely that layer **291** abutted the foundation **280** as the result of rapid accumulation following a burning/collapsing superstructure. This may also explain the close proximity of the upside-down pottery vessels to the wall, and the fact that they were all filled with the same charcoal-rich deposit.

The continuation of layer **272** into the southern part of the trench is interesting as it is indicative of a fairly substantial surface which requires further investigation to assess its full extent and its stratigraphic relationship to other contexts. This deposit was rich in artefactual material, including a number of fragments of 8th-7th century BC zoomorphic figurines and significant quantities of pottery sherds (including some dated to the 12th-11th centuries BC). These probably indicate that this layer was associated with the disturbance and redeposition of earlier material.

6.1.2 *Walls and Structures*

Foundation **280** was lifted this year following full recording last year. Another possible structure consisting of undressed limestone boulders on a north-south alignment was revealed in the south-western corner of the trench. Unfortunately, the position of this wall directly beneath, and extending beyond, the western trench baulk could prove problematic in terms of future investigation.

6.1.3 *Overall Conclusions for Trench A*

The broad aims and objectives for Trench A, as outlined in last year's report (Everill et al 2012) and summarised above, were addressed as follows:

- The rubble deposit revealed in 2011 (**286**) was determined to be a continuation of **281**, stratigraphically above the foundation **280**.
- Layer **287** was removed and the area in the central part of the trench was reduced. Layer **290** was further revealed, but it is not fully understood at this time and will require further excavation and recording next year.
- Following investigation, no direct relationship was identified between layer **290** and the foundation **280**.

- The southern part of the trench was reduced and new layers were identified. Further investigation will be required next year to determine the topography of this trench as the phasing of this trench remains unclear.
- New section drawings were produced this year for the east- and south-facing trench edges, to add to the north-facing section drawing produced in 2010.

6.2 Trench B: General Discussion of Results

6.2.1 Deposits and Cut Features

The removal of layer **443** in the cemetery sondage revealed the full extent of layer **460**, which was determined through the excavation of an exploratory slot to be a sterile natural layer present from a depth of -2.84m relative to the zero established in the 1980s.

The pottery fragments and worked riverstones that characterise the earliest cultural layer (**413**) might belong to the late Neolithic or Bronze Age. The pottery was a dark coarseware, often with protuberances on the outside of the rim/ shoulder and impressions of matting on the base. In addition to the pottery and fishing weights/ reels fashioned from flat riverstones, a number of worked pieces of flint were found including a possible scraper, a partially polished stone adze. Analogies will be sought from within the archaeological literature to determine the precise date of this material.

In the northern part of the trench the removal of the rubble layers continued. A negative feature was observed within the south-facing section, just south of the preserved Hellenistic wall (**381**). This was interpreted as either a ditch, or perhaps a palaeochannel, which must have been backfilled prior to the construction of the Hellenistic building. The predicted line of the feature would meet the extant north-south cemetery wall, and this might indicate a topographic feature utilised in the early establishment of the cemetery area.

6.2.2 Burials

Two grave cuts (**451** and **455**) were identified in the trench edges of the cemetery sondage, but were not further excavated.

6.2.6 Overall Conclusions for Trench B

The broad aims and objectives for Trench B, as outlined in last year's report (Everill et al 2012) and summarised above, were addressed as follows:

- The second half of the pit found within the cemetery area was excavated.
- Colluvial deposit **443** was removed.
- Layers **422** and **429** were removed and the charcoal patches to the north of the cemetery walls were investigated.
- New section drawings were produced this year for the east- and south-facing trench edges.

6.3 Trench A: Proposed Aims and Objectives for 2013

- To fully remove **294** so that a full understanding of the daub concentration **288** and surface/layer **272** can be established.
- To investigate the stratigraphic relationship between **290** and **272**. To determine if **272** is actually truncated by a cut filled with **290** and, if it is, to interpret the negative feature. Could it, for example, be a WNW-ESE aligned linear ditch/hollow-way at the foot of the hill?
- To concentrate on reducing the level at the south of the trench with the aim of revealing the topography of the underlying deposits.
- To consider the possibility that layer **272** represents an external yard/surface as it seems to have been respected by the buildings of the Hellenistic period.
- To assign a context number to the recently revealed gravelly silt deposit and associated wall segment in the south-western corner of the trench. To investigate its stratigraphic relationships, and the possible implications if it is shown to be the first foundation cut to be observed.

6.4 Trench B: Proposed Aims and Objectives for 2013

- With the cemetery sondage backfilled it will be safe to investigate the deposits adjacent to the cemetery walls (**104** and **105**) to assess the extent of the earliest cemetery which pre-dates those walls.
- To continue excavating the colluvial layer (**446**) to the north
- To complete the excavation of the earliest cultural layers and to reveal natural deposits across the trench

7.0 REFERENCES

- Armour, N. and Colvin, I. 2004. Nokalakevi Expedition Interim Report 2001-2003 Seasons. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Bokeria, M. 2009 Report on Environmental Samples: Nokalakevi 2007 in Lomitashvili, D. (ed) *Angarishi 2008*. Unpublished Georgian National Museum report.
- Dubois du Montpereux, F. 1839. *Voyages autour du Caucase*. Paris.
- Everill, P. 2003. Anglo Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi: Trench B: 2002-2003. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Everill, P. 2005a. Anglo Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi: Trench B: 2004. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Everill, P. 2005b. Anglo Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi: Trench B: 2005. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Everill, P. 2007. *NOK 07/A Interim Excavation Report*. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Everill, P. and Ginns, A. 2005. *Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi: Trench A 2004*. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Everill, P., Colvin, I., Neil, B. and Lomitashvili, D. 2010. Nokalakevi-Archaeopolis: ten years of Anglo-Georgian collaboration. *Antiquity* 84 (326) <http://www.antiquity.ac.uk/projgall/everill326/>
- Everill, P., Slater, A., James, L. and Colvin, I. 2011a. *Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi: Interim report on excavations in 2010*. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Everill, P., Marter, P., Lomitashvili, D., Murgulia, N. 2011b. [In Georgian] Mapping Archaeopolis: GPS survey at the multi-period site of Nokalakevi. *Bulletin of the Georgian National Museum. Series of Social Sciences #2 (47-B)*: 117-130
- Everill, P., James, L., Bone, K., and Colvin, I. 2012. Interim report on excavations at Nokalakevi-Archaeopolis in 2011. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Grant, K. and Everill, P. 2009. *Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi: Interim report on excavations July 2008*. Unpublished AGEN report.
- Grant, K., Russel, C. and Everill, P. 2010. *Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi: Interim report on excavations July 2009*. Unpublished AGEN report.

Gruwier, B. 2011. Assessment of Faunal Remains: Nokalakevi 2010. Unpublished AGEN report

IfA 2008. Standard and Guidance for archaeological excavation
http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/node-files/ifa_standards_excavation.pdf (Accessed Feb 2013)

IfA 2012. Code of Conduct

<http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/node-files/Code-of-conduct-Nov-2012.pdf> (Accessed Feb 2013)

Kvavadze, E. 2010. Palynology Report: Nokalakevi 2009 in Lomitashvili, D. (ed) *Nokalakevis saertashoriso arkeologiuri ekspeditsia 2009*. Unpublished Georgian National Museum report.

Lomitashvili, D. (ed) 2010. *Nokalakevis saertashoriso arkeologiuri ekspeditsia 2009*. Unpublished Georgian National Museum report.

Neil, B. 2006. *Area A Field Report*. Unpublished AGEN report.

Neil, B. In Prep. Osteological Assessment: Nokalakevi 2009-2010

Schneider, A. M. 1931 'Archaeopolis (Nokalakewi)' in *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 7 Jahrg. Nr 27 p. 354-5.

Zakariaia, P. (ed) 1981. *Nokalakevi-Arkeopolisi: arkeologiuri gatxrebi I 1973-1977*. Tbilisi

Zakariaia, P. (ed) 1987. *Nokalakevi-Arkeopolisi: arkeologiuri gatxrebi II 1978-1982*. Tbilisi

Zakariaia, P. (ed) 1993. *Nokalakevi-Arkeopolisi: arkeologiuri gatxrebi III 1983-1989*. Tbilisi

8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The expedition has received financial support over the years from FaRiG, Oxford's Marjory-Wardrop and Craven funds, Archaeology Abroad, the British Academy's Black Sea Initiative, the British Institute of Archaeology in Ankara, Worcester College, Oxford, and the University of Winchester. Their generosity has made the expedition possible. Support has also been forthcoming from a great many individuals, foremost among them our many volunteers. We owe particular gratitude to the following individuals and institutions: University of Winchester Department of Archaeology, Bradford University Archaeology Department, Professor David Braund (Exeter University), Cambridge University Archaeology Department, the Cambridge Archaeology Unit, Archaeology South-East, David Connolly (BAJR.org), Enrico Kokaia (late Director of the Nokalakevi Museum) and his staff, Museum of London Archaeology Service, RESCUE, Southampton University Archaeology Department, Professor Michael Vickers (Oxford University).

Lastly, our greatest debt is to our Georgian colleagues, and the government and residents of Nokalakevi and Senaki, whose friendship and hospitality have been overwhelming.

APPENDIX*Table 4: Trench A Small Finds Register (All levels refer to the zero established in the 1980s)*

Small Find No.	Context No.	Description	Trench Coordinates	Level
1	272	Cu alloy bracelet	105.6/207.6	-3.93
2	291	Pottery vessel	105.18/203.5	-4.1
3	291	Pottery vessel	104.5/204.25	-4.09
4	291	Pottery vessel	104.32/204.42	-4.09
5	291	Pottery vessel	103.38/202.38	-4.04
6	272	Bone needle	105.0/206.52	-4.07
7	290	Copper alloy object	98.78/207.08	-4.15
8	283	Pottery vessel	100.90/204.50	-4.22
9	290	8 th -7 th century BC sardonic bead	97.40/208.30	-4.05
10	290	Horn of ram figurine	103.35/206.20	-4.15
11	290	Pottery lid handle	102.45/206.47	-4.17

Table 5: Trench B Small Finds Register (All levels refer to the zero established in the 1980s)

Small Find No.	Context No.	Description	Trench Coordinates	Level
1	445	Body of a double headed figurine	106.9/213.8	-0.6
2	445	Flint arrowhead	106.04/214.23	-0.59
3	446	Cu alloy bead	106.4/211.02	-0.84